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DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

MFG. 9/69

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TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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1. PRESS RELEASE ISSUED HERE TODAY. TEXT FOLLOWS:

2.A. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, IN NOTE DELIVERED TO HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER TRIBURCIO CARIAS CASTILLO NOVEMBER 12 BY U.S. AMBASSADOR HEWSON A. RYAN, HAS AGREED TO NEGOTIATE WITH HONDURAS GOVERNMENT FINAL SETTLEMENT OF PROBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER SWAN ISLANDS.

B. JOINT PRESS RELEASE ISSUED IN TEGUCIGALPA ON SAME DAY BY OUR EMBASSY AND GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS SAID: "GOVERNMENT OF UNITED STATES IN SPIRIT OF CLOSE COOPERATION AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES IS PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE HONDURAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER SWAN ISLANDS. IN RECIPROCAL GESTURE OF COOPERATION AND FRIENDSHIP, GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS WOULD ALLOW UNITED STATES TO RETAIN ITS INSTALLATIONS OF ISLANDS, WHICH CONSIST OF RADIO BEACON FOR INTERNATIONAL NAVIGATION AND AN UPPER-AIR WEHATER SOUNDING STATION, SERVICES OF WHICH ARE FREELY AVAILABLE TO ALL NATIONS."

C. PRESIDENT NIXON HAD EARLIER AUTHORIZED SECRETARY OF STATE, AS ACT OF GOOD-WILL TOWARD OUR LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS, TO SEEK AN EARLY SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND HONDURAS

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ON ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER SWAN ISLAND, WHICH ARE ABOUT
100 MILES NORTHEAST OF CARIBBEAN COAST OF HONDURAS.

3. IN ADDITION, DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ENGAGED IN FOLLOWING
EXCHANGE AT NOON BRIEFING FOR PRESS:

4. SPOKESMAN:... U.S. AND HONDURAS WILL NEGOTIATE ON SWAN
ISLANDS. U.S. TOOK POSSESSION OF SWAN ISLAND IN 1863 UNDER
GUANO ACT.

5. Q: YOU'RE KIDDING!

Y. A: IN ORDER THAT AMERICANS COULD MINE GUANO. GUANO ACT
PROVIDES THAT PRESIDNET CAN CONSIDER AN UNOCCUPIED ISLAND NOT
WITHIN JURISDICTION OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT AS "APPERTAINING TO
UNITED STATES."

7. Q: AS WHAT?

8. A: "APPERTAINING TO UNITED STATES", WHEN U.S. CITIZENS
DISCOVERED DEPOSITS OF GUANO AND DESIRED TO MINE GUANO.
HONDURAS CLAIMS THAT ISLANDS WERE DISCOVERED BY SPANISH, BECAME
PART OF SPANISH EMPIRE, AND THAT HONDURAS SUCCEEDED TO SPANISH
RIGHTS WHEN IT BECAME INDEPENDENT. ISLANDS ARE PRACTICALLY
UNINHABITED. FOUR AMERICANS AND DOZEN CAYMAN ISLANDERS MAINTAIN
OUR FACILITIES THERE. WE ARE USING SWAN ISLANDS FOR THESE
FACILITIES: FEDERAL AVIATION RADIO BEACON AND WEATHER
OBSERVATION STATION. HONDURAS HAS INDICATED ITS WILLINGNESS
TO ALLOW CONTINUED USE OF THE ISLANDS FOR THESE FACILITIES.

9. Q: IS THERE NO GUANO LEFT TO MINE?

10. A: NO COMMENT.

11.

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12. THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ANSWERED, AS SPOKESMAN'S ATTENTION
WAS DIVERTED TO A QUESTION ON ANOTHER SUBJECT.

ROGERS

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